Meeting of the States Parties to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction

5 June 2018

Original: English

2018 Meeting
Geneva, 4-7 December 2018

Meeting of Experts on Institutional strengthening of the Convention
Geneva, 16 August 2018
Item 2 of the provisional agenda
Adoption of the agenda

Provisional agenda for the Meeting of Experts on Institutional strengthening of the Convention

Submitted by the Chair

1. Opening of the meeting
2. Adoption of the agenda
3. Adoption of the rules of procedure
4. Consideration of the full range of approaches and options to further strengthen the Convention and its functioning through possible additional legal measures or other measures in the framework of the Convention
5. Adoption of the factual report reflecting the deliberations of the meeting, including possible outcomes
6. Closing of the meeting

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Meeting of the States Parties to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction

18 June 2018

Original: English

2018 Meeting
Geneva, 4-7 December 2018

Meeting of Experts on Institutional Strengthening of the Convention
Geneva, 16 August 2018
Item 4 of the provisional agenda
Consideration of the full range of approaches and options to further strengthen the Convention and its functioning through possible additional legal measures or other measures in the framework of the Convention

Background information document submitted by the Implementation Support Unit

I. Introduction

1. The 2017 Meeting of States Parties to the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC) reached consensus on an intersessional programme from 2018 to 2020. The purpose of the intersessional programme is to discuss, and promote common understanding and effective action on those issues identified for inclusion in the inters ssional programme. The work in the intersessional period will be guided by the aim of strengthening the implementation of all articles of the Convention in order to better respond to current challenges.

2. The intersessional programme consists of annual Meetings of States Parties preceded by annual Meetings of Experts. Each Meeting of Experts will prepare for the consideration of the annual Meeting of States Parties a factual report reflecting its deliberations, including possible outcomes. All meetings, both of Experts and of States Parties will reach any conclusions or results by consensus. The Ninth Review Conference will consider the work and outcomes it receives from the Meetings of States Parties and the Meetings of Experts and decide by consensus on any inputs from the intersessional programme and on any further action.

3. Out of the eight days allocated per year for the five open-ended Meetings of Experts, one day will be allocated to the topic of 'Institutional Strengthening of the Convention' to be discussed by the fifth Meeting of Experts (MX5). States Parties decided that MX5 will consider one topic, namely "Consideration of the full range of approaches and options to further strengthen the Convention and its functioning through possible additional legal measures or other measures in the framework of the Convention".

4. The purpose of this paper is to facilitate States Parties' preparations for and deliberations during MX5 by providing relevant background information on the above topic. Accordingly, the document provides a historical account of efforts to institutionally strengthen the Convention since its entry into force. It does so in a chronological order by using the BWC Review Conferences as a reference framework. The Annex contains a listing of working papers submitted between 2012 and 2017 which address the topic of institutional strengthening of the Convention.

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II. Measures agreed by States Parties for the institutional strengthening of the Convention

First Review Conference, 1980

5. The First Review Conference took place in Geneva from 3 to 21 March 1980. The Conference elaborated upon the provisions of Article V and agreed that interested States Parties could use various international procedures to effectively and adequately ensure the implementation of the Convention. The Conference agreed that "These procedures include, inter alia, the right of any States Party subsequently to request that a consultative meeting open to all States Parties be convened at expert level."[1] Furthermore, the Conference also concluded that "any information provided by States Parties on scientific and technological developments relevant to the Convention, and on its implementation, shall be made periodically available to States Parties in particular through the United Nations Centre for Disarmament."[2] Given that Article XII of the Convention only provided for a first Review Conference, the Conference also decided that a Second Review Conference should be held in Geneva not earlier than 1985, and, in any case not later than 1990.

Second Review Conference, 1986

6. The Second Review Conference took place in Geneva from 8 to 26 September 1986. The Final Document of the Conference concluded that the provisions of the BWC cover all relevant current and future scientific and technological developments.[3]

7. Importantly in terms of institutional strengthening of the Convention, the Conference established a mechanism for the annual exchange of information, known as Confidence-Building Measures (CBMs). The Conference "mindful of the provisions of Article V and Article X of the Convention, and determined to strengthen its authority and to enhance confidence in the implementation of its provisions" agreed that "the States Parties are to implement, on the basis of mutual co-operation, the following measures, in order to prevent or reduce the occurrence of ambiguities, doubts and suspicions, and in order to improve international co-operation in the field of peaceful bacteriological (biological) activities".[4] The agreed measures included exchange of data on research centres and laboratories, exchange of information on all outbreaks of infectious diseases that seem to deviate from the normal pattern, encouragement of publication of results of biological research directly related to the Convention and active promotion of contacts between scientists engaged in biological research directly related to the Convention.

8. The Conference itself did not specify the modalities for implementation of these measures, but instead established an Ad Hoc Meeting of Scientific and Technical Experts from States Parties to Finalise the Modalities for the Exchange of Information and Data. This meeting was held in Geneva from 31 March to 15 April 1987 and agreed on guidelines for what each measure covered and on the type of information to be provided for each.[5]

9. The Conference also strengthened the consultative mechanism established by the First Review Conference by further elaborating the role, format and functions of the consultative meeting.[6]

10. Furthermore, in respect to Article X of the Convention, the Conference requested the United Nations Secretary-General to propose for inclusion on the agenda of a relevant United Nations body a discussion and examination of the means for improving institutional mechanisms in order to facilitate the fullest possible exchange of equipment, materials and

[1] See BWC/CONF.I/10, page 8.
[2] See BWC/CONF.I/10, page 10.
[3] See BWC/CONF.II/13/II, page 3.
[4] See BWC/CONF.II/13/II, page 6.
[5] See BWC/CONF.II/EX/2.
[6] See BWC/CONF.II/13/II, pages 5-6.

scientific and technological information for peaceful purposes. The Conference urged States Parties and the United Nations Secretariat to include information and suggestions on the implementation of Article X and also urged relevant specialized agencies, such as FAO, UNESCO, UNIDO, WIPO and WHO, to participate. Finally, the Conference requested States Parties and the United Nations Secretariat to provide information on the implementation of Article X for examination by the next Review Conference.[7]

11. The Conference decided that the Third Review Conference should take place no later than 1991. Noting the differing views with regard to verification, the Conference also decided that the Third Review Conference should consider, inter alia, whether or not further actions are called for to create further cooperative measures in the context of Article V, or legally binding improvements to the Convention, or a combination of both.

Third Review Conference, 1991

12. The Third Review Conference, held in Geneva from 9 to 27 September 1991, reaffirmed that the BWC covers agents relating to humans, animals and plants; requested States Parties to re-examine their national implementation measures; further elaborated upon the provisions for consultative meetings agreed by the First and Second Review Conferences; considered that the United Nations, with the help of appropriate intergovernmental organizations such as the WHO, could play a coordinating role in the event that Article VII would be invoked; and requested that information on the implementation of Article X on peaceful uses of the biological sciences should be provided to the United Nations.

13. With regard to CBMs, the Conference reaffirmed and improved the system agreed by the Second Review Conference. Most substantively, the existing four measures were amended and three entirely new measures were added on declaration of legislation, regulations and other measures, declaration of past activities in offensive and/or defensive biological research development programmes and declaration of vaccine production facilities.[8]

14. Regarding Article X, the Conference repeated the request made at the Second Review Conference to the United Nations Secretary-General, and further decided that the discussion should take place not later than 1993. The Conference also considered that the establishment of a world data bank under the supervision of the United Nations might be a suitable way of facilitating the flow of information in the field of genetic engineering, biotechnology and other scientific developments.[9]

15. Determined to strengthen the effectiveness and improve the implementation of the Convention, and recognizing that verification could reinforce the Convention, the Conference established an Ad Hoc Group of Governmental Experts (VEREX) to "identify and examine potential verification measures from a scientific and technical standpoint."[10] The Conference decided that VEREX "shall seek to identify measures which could determine:

(a) Whether a State party is developing, producing, stockpiling, acquiring or retaining microbial or other biological agents or toxins, of types and in quantities that have no justification for prophylactic, protective or peaceful purposes;

(b) Whether a State party is developing, producing, stockpiling, acquiring or retaining weapons, equipment or means of delivery designed to use such agents or toxins for hostile purposes or in armed conflict."[11]

16. The Conference noted that "[s]such measures could be addressed singly or, in combination. Specifically, the Group shall seek to evaluate potential verification measures,

[7] See BWC/CONF.II/13/II, pages 8-9.
[8] See BWC/CONF.III/23, Part II, pages 14-15.
[9] See BWC/CONF.III/23, Part II, page 22.
[10] See BWC/CONF.III/23, Part II, page 16.
[11] See BWC/CONF.III/23, Part II, page 17.

taking into account the broad range of types and quantities of microbial and other biological agents and toxins, whether naturally occurring or altered, which are capable of being used as means of warfare."[12]

17. In examining potential verification measures, the Conference agreed that VEREX would take into account data and other information relevant to the Convention provided by States Parties and that it would adopt a consensus report taking into account views expressed in the course of its work. The Conference decided that if a majority of States Parties ask for the convening of a conference to examine the report, such a conference will be convened to decide on any further action.

18. The Conference decided that the Fourth Review Conference should take place not later than 1996 and also recommended that conferences to review the operation of the Convention should be held at least every five years.[13]

Ad Hoc Group of Governmental Experts to Identify and Examine Potential Verification Measures from a Scientific and Technical standpoint (VEREX), 1992-93

19. VEREX held four sessions in Geneva between 1992 and 1993.[14] During its first session, the Group identified the following 21 potential measures for later examination and evaluation[15]:

Off-site measures

Information monitoring

- Surveillance of publications
- Surveillance of legislation
- Data on transfers and transfer requests and on production
- Multilateral information sharing

Data exchange

- Declarations
- Notifications

Remote Sensing

- Surveillance by satellite
- Surveillance by aircraft
- Ground based surveillance

Inspections

- Sampling and identification
- Observation
- Auditing

On-site Measures

Exchange visits

- international arrangements

[12] See BWC/CONF.III/23, Part II, page 17.
[13] See BWC/CONF.III/23, Part II, pages 23-24.
[14] VEREX 1: 30 March to 10 April 1992; VEREX 2: 23 November to 4 December 1992; VEREX 3: 24 May to 4 June 1993; and VEREX 4: 13 to 24 September 1993.
[15] See BWC/CONF.III/VEREX/2, Annex II.

Inspections

- Interviewing
- Visual inspection
- Identification of key equipment
- Auditing
- Sampling and identification
- Medical examination

Continuous monitoring

- by instruments
- by personnel

20. In its final report, VEREX considered, from a scientific and technical standpoint, "that some of the verification measures would contribute to strengthening the effectiveness and improve the implementation of the Convention, also recognizing that appropriate and effective verification could reinforce the Convention."[16] Furthermore, VEREX concluded that "potential verification measures as identified and evaluated could be useful to varying degrees in enhancing confidence, through increased transparency, that States Parties were fulfilling their obligations under the BWC." [17]

Special Conference, 1994

21. After the final report of VEREX had been circulated, a majority of States Parties requested the convening of a Special Conference which took place in Geneva from 19 to 30 September 1994. The Conference, "determined to strengthen the effectiveness and improve the implementation of the Convention and recognizing that effective verification could reinforce the Convention", agreed to establish an Ad Hoc Group, open to all States Parties.[18] The objective of the Ad Hoc Group was "to consider appropriate measures, including possible verification measures, and draft proposals to strengthen the Convention, to be included, as appropriate, in a legally binding instrument".[19] The Ad Hoc Group was mandated to consider four specific areas:

(a) definitions of terms and objective criteria;

(b) the incorporation of existing and further enhanced confidence-building and transparency measures, as appropriate, into the regime;

(c) a system of measures to promote compliance with the Convention, including, as appropriate, measures identified, examined and evaluated in the VEREX report; and

(d) specific measures designed to ensure effective and full implementation of Article X, which also avoid any restrictions incompatible with the obligations undertaken under the Convention.

22. The Conference instructed the Ad Hoc Group to complete its work as soon as possible and to submit a consensus report to be considered at the Fourth Review Conference in 1996, or later at a Special Conference.

[16] BWC/CONF.III/VEREX/8, page 8.
[17] BWC/CONF.III/VEREX/8, page 8.
[18] See BWC/SPCONF/1, Part II, paragraph 36.
[19] See BWC/SPCONF/1, Part II, paragraph 36.

Ad Hoc Group, 1995-1996

23. The Ad Hoc Group held its first session in January 1995 and began its substantive work at its subsequent sessions. By the time of the Fourth Review Conference in November 1996, the Ad Hoc Group had only met for eight weeks of substantive negotiations and it reported to the Fourth Review Conference that it had been unable to complete its work by that time.[20] The Group therefore decided to intensify its work after the Review Conference with a view to completing it as soon as possible before the commencement of the Fifth Review Conference.

Fourth Review Conference, 1996

24. The Fourth Review Conference, held in Geneva from 25 November to 6 December 1996, reaffirmed that the use of biological weapons is effectively prohibited by the Convention under all circumstances, and reaffirmed that all destruction and conversion activities of former weapons and related facilities should take place prior to accession to the Convention. It recommended a series of specific measures to enhance the implementation of Article X.[21]

25. The Conference examined the CBM system but did not make any changes, noting that the incorporation of existing and further enhanced confidence-building and transparency measures, as appropriate, into a regime to strengthen the Convention, was being considered by the Ad Hoc Group.[22]

26. With regard to the Ad Hoc Group, the Conference welcomed the Group's progress report and also welcomed the decision to intensify its work. The Conference encouraged the Group to review its methods of work and to move to a negotiating format.[23]

27. The Conference decided that the Fifth Review Conference should be held not later than 2001 and recommended that conferences to review the operation of the Convention should be held at least every five years.

Ad Hoc Group, 1997-2001

28. At its seventh session in July 1997, the Ad Hoc Group moved into a negotiating format with the circulation of a "rolling text" of a protocol to the Convention.[24] The Chair of the Ad Hoc Group reiterated that the document was without prejudice to the positions of delegations and did not imply agreement on its scope or content. Negotiations on the basis of the rolling text continued until the twenty-third session of the Ad Hoc Group in April 2001 when the Chair formally introduced a document containing his compromise suggestions on all outstanding issues, prepared on the basis of the "rolling text".[25]

29. However, at its twenty-fourth session in July/August 2001, which was its last scheduled session before the Fifth Review Conference, the Ad Hoc Group was unable to conclude the negotiations on the draft protocol and could not reach consensus on the report of its work.

Fifth Review Conference, 2001 and 2002

30. The Fifth Review Conference took place in Geneva from 19 November to 7 December 2001. At its final plenary meeting on 7 December 2001, the Conference was

[20] See BWC/AD HOC GROUP/32, paragraph 9.
[21] See BWC/CONF.IV/9, Part II, pages 25-26.
[22] See BWC/CONF.IV/9, Part II, page 19.
[23] See BWC/CONF.IV/9, Part II, page 29.
[24] See BWC/AD HOC GROUP/35.
[25] See BWC/AD HOC GROUP/CRP.8.

unable to adopt a final report and instead decided by consensus to adjourn its proceedings and reconvene in Geneva one year later.[26]

31. At the resumed session, from 11 to 22 November 2002, the Conference decided to establish an intersessional programme from 2003 to 2005 consisting of a series of annual Meetings of Experts with a duration of two weeks and annual Meetings of States Parties with a duration of one week. The purpose of the meetings would be to discuss and promote common understanding and effective action on the following five topics:

(a) the adoption of necessary national measures to implement the prohibitions set forth in the Convention, including the enactment of penal legislation (2003);

(b) national mechanisms to establish and maintain the security and oversight of pathogenic microorganisms and toxins (2003);

(c) enhancing international capabilities for responding to, investigating and mitigating the effects of cases of alleged use of biological or toxin weapons or suspicious outbreaks of disease (2004);

(d) strengthening and broadening national and international institutional efforts and existing mechanisms for the surveillance, detection, diagnosis and combating of infectious diseases affecting humans, animals, and plants (2004); and

(e) the content, promulgation, and adoption of codes of conduct for scientists (2005).[27]

32. The Review Conference also decided that the Sixth Review Conference would take place in 2006.

Sixth Review Conference, 2006

33. The Sixth Review Conference took place in Geneva from 20 November to 8 December 2006. It reviewed the operation of the Convention and adopted a final report on 8 December. It also endorsed the consensus outcome documents from the 2003, 2004 and 2005 Meetings of States Parties and noted that the Meetings of Experts and Meetings of States Parties had functioned as an important forum for exchange of national experiences and in-depth deliberations among States Parties. The Meetings of States Parties had engendered greater common understanding on steps to be taken to further strengthen the implementation of the Convention.[28]

34. The Conference decided on an intersessional programme from 2007 to 2010 consisting of annual Meetings of States Parties of one week's duration prepared by annual one-week Meetings of Experts. The intersessional programme retained the mandate from the previous programme, namely to discuss, and promote common understanding and effective action on a list of agreed topics. The topics agreed were the following:

(a) Ways and means to enhance national implementation, including enforcement of national legislation, strengthening of national institutions and coordination among national law enforcement institutions (2007);

(b) Regional and subregional cooperation on implementation of the Convention (2007);

(c) National, regional and international measures to improve biosafety and biosecurity, including laboratory safety and security of pathogens and toxins (2008);

(d) Oversight, education, awareness raising, and adoption and/or development of codes of conduct with the aim of preventing misuse in the context of advances in bio-science and bio-technology research with the potential of use for purposes prohibited by the Convention (2008);

[26] See BWC/CONF.V/17, Annex I, paragraph 33.
[27] See BWC/CONF.V/17, paragraph 18.
[28] See BWC/CONF.VI/6, Part III, paragraphs 2-4.

(e) With a view to enhancing international cooperation, assistance and exchange in biological sciences and technology for peaceful purposes, promoting capacity building in the fields of disease surveillance, detection, diagnosis, and containment of infectious diseases: (1) for States Parties in need of assistance, identifying requirements and requests for capacity enhancement; and (2) from States Parties in a position to do so, and international organizations, opportunities for providing assistance related to these fields (2009); and

(f) Provision of assistance and coordination with relevant organizations upon request by any State Party in the case of alleged use of biological or toxin weapons, including improving national capabilities for disease surveillance, detection and diagnosis and public health systems (2010).[29]

35. The Conference agreed that the Chairs of the Meetings of States Parties "shall coordinate universalization activities, address States not party to the Convention, provide an annual report on universalization activities at Meetings of States Parties, and provide a progress report to the Seventh Review Conference, bearing in mind the primary responsibility of the States Parties on the implementation of this decision".[30]

36. The Conference established an Implementation Support Unit (ISU) to provide administrative support to meetings agreed by the Conference as well as comprehensive implementation and universalization of the Convention and the exchange of confidence-building measures.[31] The Conference decided that the ISU of three full time staff members would be located in the Geneva Branch of the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA) and funded by the States Parties to the Convention.

37. The Conference decided that each State Party should designate a national point of contact for coordinating national implementation of the Convention and communicating with other States Parties and relevant international organizations; preparing the submission of confidence-building measures; and facilitating information exchange of universalization efforts.

38. The Conference considered the CBM system and revised and updated various aspects of the procedure for submitting, collating and publishing the CBMs, and for reporting on participation.

39. The Conference decided that the Seventh Review Conference should take place not later than 2011 and recommended that conferences to review the operation of the Convention should be held at least every five years.

Seventh Review Conference, 2011

40. The Seventh Review Conference took place in Geneva from 5 to 22 December 2011. The Conference reviewed the operation of the Convention and also noted that the meetings of States Parties and Meetings of Experts held from 2007 to 2010 had functioned as an important forum for exchange of national experiences and in-depth deliberations among States Parties.[32] The Conference agreed on a re-structured intersessional process from 2012 to 2015 comprising of Meetings of States Parties of one-week duration held each year, to discuss, and promote common understanding and effective action on the topics identified by the Conference. The annual Chair would be supported by two annual Vice-Chairs. Each Meeting of States Parties was preceded by a one-week Meeting of Experts.[33]

41. Differently to the two previous intersessional programmes, the Conference agreed on three "Standing Agenda Items", which were addressed at both the Meetings of Experts and Meetings of States Parties in every year from 2012 to 2015:

[29] See BWC/CONF.VI/6, Part III, paragraph 7.
[30] See BWC/CONF.VI/6, Part III, paragraph 11 (b).
[31] See BWC/CONF.VI/6, Part III, paragraphs 5 and 6.
[32] See BWC/CONF.VII/7, Part III, paragraph 2.
[33] See BWC/CONF.VII/7, Part III, Section B.

(a) Cooperation and assistance, with a particular focus on strengthening cooperation and assistance under Article X;

(b) Review of developments in the field of science and technology related to the Convention; and

(c) Strengthening national implementation.[34]

42. The Seventh Review Conference further decided that two other items would be discussed during the intersessional programme in the years indicated:

(a) How to enable fuller participation in the CBMs (2012 and 2013);

(b) How to strengthen implementation of Article VII, including consideration of detailed procedures and mechanisms for the provision of assistance and cooperation by States Parties (2014 and 2015).[35]

43. The Seventh Review Conference decided to renew the mandate of the ISU, mutatis mutandis, for the period from 2012 to 2016. The Conference also decided, that in addition to the tasks mandated by the Sixth Review Conference, the ISU would also implement the decision to establish and administer a "database system to facilitate requests for and offers of exchange of assistance and cooperation among States Parties".[36] In this context, it requested the ISU to report to States Parties on the operation of the database detailing the offers made, requests sought and matches made during a calendar year. As part of the expanded mandate given to the ISU, the Conference also tasked the ISU to facilitating the associated exchange of information among States Parties, and support, as appropriate, the implementation by the States Parties of the decisions and recommendations of the Seventh Review Conference.

44. The Conference also established a sponsorship programme to "support and increase the participation of developing States Parties in the meetings of the intersessional programme".[37] The programme would be funded by voluntary contributions from States Parties in a position to provide them and would be administered by the ISU in consultation with the annual Chair and Vice-Chairs. Priority for sponsorship would be given to those States Parties which have previously not participated in the meetings, or have been unable to regularly send experts from capital. In addition, sponsorship could be provided, depending upon the availability of resources, to enhance participation of States not party in order to promote universalization of the Convention.

45. The Conference also encouraged States Parties to provide at least biannually information on how they implement Article X to the Implementation Support Unit, and requested the Unit to collate the reports received.[38]

46. Furthermore, the Conference decided that the costs of the intersessional programme would be shared by all States Parties to the Convention, based on the United Nations scale of assessment pro-rated to take into account differences in membership between the Convention and the United Nations. The Conference also decided that the Chairs of Meetings of States Parties should coordinate universalization activities, address States not party to the Convention, provide an annual report on universalization activities to the Meetings of States Parties, and provide a progress report to the Eighth Review Conference.

47. The Conference took steps to make CBMs more user friendly by adopting revised reporting forms and decided to consider how to enable fuller participation in the CBMs during the intersessional programme in 2012 and 2013.[39] Moreover, the Conference requested the ISU, in cooperation with States Parties, to continue examining and developing options for electronic means of submission of CBMs.

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[34] See BWC/CONF.VII/7, Part III, paragraph 8.
[35] See BWC/CONF.VII/7, Part III, paragraph 9.
[36] See BWC/CONF.VII/7, Part III, paragraphs 17–20.
[37] See BWC/CONF.VII/7, Part III, paragraph 21.
[38] see BWC/CONF.VII/7, Part II, paragraph 61.
[39] See BWC/CONF.VII/7, Annex I.

48. The Conference decided that the Eighth Review Conference should take place not later than 2016 and, whereas previous review conferences had "recommended" that subsequent review conferences take place every five years, the Seventh Review Conference "decided" that this should be the case.[40]

Eighth Review Conference, 2016

49. The Eighth Review Conference took place in Geneva from 7 to 25 November 2016. The Conference reviewed the operation of the Convention and elaborated upon previously agreed language on Article VII and supported the establishment of a database open to all States Parties to facilitate assistance under the framework of Article VII.

50. The Conference was unable to agree on a substantive intersessional programme like those held between 2003-05, 2007-10 and 2012-15. Instead, the Conference decided that States Parties should hold annual meetings. The first such meeting, to be held in Geneva in 2017 with a duration of up to five days, was mandated to seek to make progress on issues of substance and process for the period before the next Review Conference, with a view to reaching consensus on an intersessional process.[41]

51. The Conference also decided to renew the mandate of the Implementation Support Unit for the period from 2017 to 2021 and to renew the sponsorship programme. It also decided to continue the cooperation and assistance database and requested the ISU, with inputs from States Parties, to seek to improve the database to ensure that it is more user-friendly and comprehensive, and to ensure that specific, timely and concrete offers of and requests for cooperation be provided by States Parties in the database.[42]

52. The Conference also noted that, under new UN financial procedures, funds must be available before meetings can be held. The Conference requested "States Parties to proceed with the payment of their share of the estimated costs as soon as the assessment notices have been received from the United Nations to help ensure that the meetings can be held as scheduled."[43]

53. The Conference decided that the Ninth Review Conference should take place no later than 2021 and reaffirmed the decision of the Seventh Review Conference that such conferences should take place every five years.

2017 Meeting of States Parties

54. The 2017 Meeting of States Parties took place in Geneva from 4 to 8 December. The Meeting was able to reach consensus on an intersessional programme from 2018 to 2020. The purpose of the intersessional programme is retained from the first three programmes, namely to discuss, and promote common understanding and effective action on those issues identified for inclusion in the intersessional programme. The Meeting also agreed that the work in the intersessional period would be guided by the aim of strengthening the implementation of all articles of the Convention in order to better respond to current challenges.[44]

55. A total of twelve days were allocated to the intersessional programme each year from 2018 to 2020, consisting of five back-to-back Meetings of Experts for eight days and annual Meetings of States Parties which would be of four days each. The annual Meetings of States Parties would be responsible for managing the intersessional programme, including taking necessary measures with respect to budgetary and financial matters by consensus with a view to ensuring the proper implementation of the intersessional

[40] See BWC/CONF.VII/7, Part II, paragraph 65.
[41] See BWC/CONF.VIII/Part III, paragraph 6.
[42] See BWC/CONF.VIII/Part III, paragraphs 8-10.
[43] See BWC/CONF.VIII/Part III, paragraph 12.
[44] See BWC/MSP/2017/6, paragraph 19.

programme. States Parties agreed that the Meetings of Experts would be open-ended and would consider the following topics:

- MX1 (2 days): Cooperation and assistance, with a particular focus on strengthening cooperation and assistance under Article X;
- MX2 (2 days): Review of developments in the field of science and technology related to the Convention;
- MX3 (1 day): Strengthening national implementation;
- MX4 (2 days): Assistance, response and preparedness; and
- MX5 (1 day): Institutional strengthening of the Convention.

56. The Meeting also agreed that each Meeting of Experts will prepare for the consideration of the annual Meeting of States Parties a factual report reflecting its deliberations, including possible outcomes. It was also agreed that all meetings, both of Experts and of States Parties will reach any conclusions or results by consensus.

57. Noting with concern the financial situation of the Convention, the Meeting requested the Chair of the 2018 Meeting to prepare an Information Paper on measures to address financial predictability and sustainability for the meetings agreed by the States Parties and for the Implementation Support Unit for review by States Parties in 2018.[45]

[45] See BWC/MSP/2017/6, paragraphs 20-21.

Annex

Working Papers presented by States Parties between 2012 and 2017 on the topic of institutional strengthening of the Convention (in reverse chronological order)

[English only]

2017

BWC/MSP/2017/WP.21 - Intersessional Programme - Submitted by the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela on behalf of the Group of the Non-Aligned Movement and Other States

BWC/MSP/2017/WP.12 – "Institutional Mechanism for International Cooperation and Compliance with Article X" – Submitted by the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela on behalf of the Group of the Non-Aligned Movement and Other States

BWC/MSP/2017/WP.10 - Elements of a Possible Intersessional Process - Submitted by Russian Federation, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and United States of America

BWC/MSP/2017/WP.8 - Intersessional Programme - Submitted by Cuba

BWC/MSP/2017/WP.3 - Strengthening the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention through a reinforced intersessional work programme - Submitted by the members of the Global Partnership Against the Spread of Weapons and Materials of Mass Destruction: Australia, Belgium, Canada, Chile, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Republic of Korea, Mexico, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Ukraine, the United Kingdom, the United States of America, and the European Union

BWC/MSP/2017/WP.2 - Need to establish a BWC science and technology review process - Submitted by Switzerland

2016

BWC/CONF.VIII/WP.31* - "Establishing a Non-Proliferation Export Control and International Cooperation Regime under the Framework of the Biological Weapons Convention" - Submitted by China and Pakistan

BWC/CONF.VIII/WP.26 - "Proposals for the Final Document of the Eighth Review Conference of the Biological and Toxin Weapon Convention (BTWC): Intersessional Programme, Implementation Support Unit and Science and Technology" - Submitted by the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela on behalf of the Group of the Non-Aligned Movement and Other States

BWC/CONF.VIII/WP.23 - "BTWC Article X Compliance Mechanism for the 8th Review Conference" - Submitted by the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela on behalf of the Group of the Non-Aligned Movement and Other States

BWC/CONF.VIII/WP.16 - "Enhancing the Effectiveness of the Consultative Provisions of Article V of the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention" - Submitted by the European Union

BWC/CONF.VIII/WP.12 - "The BTWC Review Process of Science and Technology" - Submitted by the Islamic Republic of Iran

BWC/CONF.VIII/WP.8 - "Draft decision on the establishment of a Temporary Working Group on Mobile Biomedical Units" - Submitted by the Russian Federation

BWC/CONF.VIII/WP.3 - "New work programme for the intersessional period until the IX Review Conference: proposal of guidelines" - Submitted by Cuba

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